

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8072

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USDEL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5529

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT IS US EG

SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT GAINS MOMENTUM

SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF INTERIM AGREEMENT ENTERED HIGH GEAR THIS WEEK AFTER PERIOD IN WHICH OPPOSITIN LIKUD/GUSH EMUNIM ELEMENTS HAD SEIZED THE INTIATIVE IN NOSIY AND SOMETIMES VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS. ISRAELI LEADERSHIP, AFTER SLOW START, IS NOW CONDUCTING ENERGETIC TWO-FRONT CAMPAIGN TO MAXIMIZE SUPPORT AMONG COLATIION MKS FOR KNESSET VOTE AND--AS IMPORTANTLY--TO EXPLAIN AGREEMENT TO ISRAELI PUBLIC THROUGH RADIO/TV APPEARANCES, RALLIES AND NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENTS. SEVERAL POLLS TAKEN DURING WEEK SHOW THAT THERE IS GROWING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AGREEMENT AS ITS DETAILS BEGIN TO EMERGE. THERE IS CONSENSUS AMONG LOCAL OBSERVERS THT KNESSET MAJORITY IS ASSURED, WITH DAYAN AND A FEW RAFI ASSOCIATES

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REMAINING MAIN HOLDOUTS FROM SOLID LABOR ALIGNMENT

BLOC IN SUPPORT OF AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. AMIDST MOUNTING EXPECTATION THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE ON VERGE OF SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION, ISRAELI LEADERSHIP IN RECENT DAYS HAS LAUNCHED INTENSIVE COUNTER-CAMPAING TO LINE UP DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR INTERIM AGREEMENT. CAMPAING IS GOING FORWARD ON TWO LEVELS: LINING UP MAXIMUM SUPPORT AMONG COALITION MKS AND, AS IMPORANTLY, EXPLAINING BENEFITS OF PROPOSED AGREEMENT TO LARGELY SKEPTICAL PUBLIC.

2. MAIN THEMES OF GOVERNMENT/PARTY CAMPAING HAVE BEEN THAT AGREEMENT--EVEN THOUGH NOT IDEAL FROM ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE--OPENS UP PROSPECT OF NEW POSITIVE CHAPTER IN EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI RELATIONS AND SETS STAGE FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD PEACE, WHILE PRESERVING ISRAEL'S VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS. MAINTENACE OF CLOSE ISRAELI/US RELATIONSHIP IS ALSO HIGHLIGHTED AS MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT. FINALLY, CAMPAIGN HAS EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO ALTERNATIVE TO REACHING AGREEMENT. AS ONE PRO-AGREEMENT COMMENTATOR PUT IT, ISSUE IS NOT WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED IN MARCH, BUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NO IF NEGOTIATIONS AGAIN COLLAPSED.

3. ON POLITICAL LEVEL, DECISION-MAKING BODIES OF COALITION PARTIES ARE ENGAGED IN INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS. TO DETERMINE HOW THEIR KNESSET REPRESENTATIVES WILL VOTE. MAIN FORUM OF LABOR ALIGNMENT--ITS KNESSET FACTION AND EXECUTIVE--LISTENED TO IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS BY RABIN AND PERES AT AUGUST 27 MEETING. SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS HAVE TOLD US THAT RABIN AND PERES MADE STRONG PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS(PERES WAS"ENTHUSIASTIC"), AND THAT MOST LABOR MKS LEFT MEETING WITH FIRMER CONVICTION RE AGREEMENT'S BENEFITS. AS TO RAFI FACTION, IT NOW APPEARS THAT ONLY DAYAN--WHO POINTEDLY ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM MEETING-- AND BEN-PORAT ARE CURRENTLY PREPARED TO VOTE AGAINST, WITH THE THREE OTHE FENCE-SITTERS WAVERING BETWEEN ABSTENTION AND POSSIBLY VOTING FOR;

4. WITH REGARD TO OTHER COALITION PARTIES, INDEPENDT LIB-CONFIDENTIAL

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ERALS HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO SUPPORT AGREEMENT (ONE ILP MK MAY ABSTAIN), AS HAS RAPHAEL FACTION OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY. OTHER NRP FACTINS WILL REACH THEIR DECISION IN NEXT DAYS. MAPAM IS SOLIDLY BEHIND AGREEMENT. WITHIN LEFT-WING OPPOSITION, THERE IS PRESSURE ON 4 YAAD MKS FROM THEIR SECRETARIAT TO RECONSIDER THEIR PLANNED ABSTENTION AND INSTEAD TO VOTE FOR AGREEMENT.

5. CAMPAIGN FOR POPULAR SUPPORT HAS ALSO ENTERED HIGH GEAR. SINCE LAST WEEKEND ISRAELI NEGOTIATORS HAVE ADDRESSED VARIETY OF PUBLIC FORUMS AND GIVEN RADIO-TV INTERVIEWS EXPLAINING INTERIM AGREEMENT. IN COURSE OF THESE PRESENTATIONS, LEADERSHIP HAS BEGUN TO DISCLOSE SUBSTANTIVE DETAILS IN EFFORT TO COUNTER-ACT LIKUD/GUSH EMUNIM DISTORTIONS AND INACCURACIES. OTHER LABOR PARTY PERSONALITIES--E.G., NAVON AND BAR LEV--HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED AGREEMENT IN EXTENSIVE TV INTERVIEWS. BAR-LEV CONCENTRATED ON ITS SECURITY ASPECTS, ASSURING PUBLIC THAT NEW SITUATION ON GROUND WOULD BE MILITARILY VIABLE AND DEFENSIBLE.

6. DEMONSTRATIONS AND COUNTER-DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE ALSO DRAMATIZED POLARIZED VIEWS OF DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF PUBLIC. ON AUGUST 28, ABOUT 10,000 PRO-AGREEMENT DEMONSTRATORS ATTENDED RALLY IN TEL AVIV'S CITY HALL SPONSORED BY MAPAM AND ITS KIBBUTZ/YOUTH AFFILIATES, WHILE AT SAME TIME GUSH EMUNIM HELD OPPOSITION MARCH AND RALLY IN JERUSALEM ATTRACTING A REPORTED 15,000 PARTICIPANTS. NEWSPAPER ADS ON BEHALF OF AGREEMENT HAVE ALSO BEGUN TO APPEAR; FOR INSTANCE ONE SUCH AD NOTES THAT QADHAFI, ASAD AND PLO ARE AGAINST AGREEMENT AND ASKS THE ISRAELIS--"ARE YOU?".

7. POLLS CONTINUE TO SHOW SIZABLE PLURALITY FOR AGREEMENT(55PERCENT-38PERCENT IN ONE, 47PERCENT-37PERCENT IN ANOTHER)

COMMENTATORS, BASING THEMSELVES ON MORE IMPRESSIONISTIC EVIDENCE, ALSO BELIEVE THAT MAJORITY OF ISRAELI PUBLIC WILL SUPPORT GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON INTERIM AGREEMENT. THERE IS SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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FEELING THAT GUSH EMUNIM/HERUT YOUTH HAVE HURT THEIR CAUSE BY RESORT TO VIOLENCE, AND HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ATTRACT NEW FOLLOWERS DURING DEMONSTRATIONS.

8. NEXT STEPS, ASSUMING THAT INTERIM AGREEMENT IS INITIALED, WILL BE CABINET APPROVAL, TO BE FOLLOWED BY MEETING OF LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND FINALLY KNESSET VOTE. AS OF TODAY, CONSENSUS OF LOCAL POLITICAL OBSERVERS IS THAT AGREEMENT WILL PASS IN KNESSET WITHOUT GREAT DIFFICULTY, THOUGH THE DEBATE MAY BE ONE OF THE STORMIEST IN RECENT YEARS.
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